

# The Striking of the Shepherd and the Scattering of the Sheep

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, a very warm welcome to you to the Wednesday lunchtime Bible talk today. Very good indeed to see you. Well, this lunchtime we are back in Mark chapter 14. So if you have one of the church Bibles, turn with me to page 851.

And we're thinking about the next section as we prepare ourselves for the cross. So we're in Mark chapter 14, and we're looking this afternoon at verses 26 to 52.

Page 851 in the church Bibles, and we'll pick it up at verse 26. And when they, that is Jesus and his disciples, when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

And Jesus said to them, You will all fall away, for it is written, I will strike the shepherds, and the sheep will be scattered.

But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. Peter said to him, Even though they all fall away, I will not.

[ 1 : 14 ] And Jesus said to him, Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times. But he said emphatically, If I must die with you, I will not deny you.

And they all said the same. And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, Sit here while I pray.

And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.

Remain here and watch. And going little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, that the hour might pass from him.

And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.

[ 2 : 24 ] And he came and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him.

And he came the third time and said to them, Are you still sleeping and taking rest? It is enough. The hour has come.

The son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise. Let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.

And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve. And with him a crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

[ 3 : 29 ] Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, The one I kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard. And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, Rabbi.

And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

And Jesus said to them, Have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.

But let the scriptures be fulfilled. And they all left him and fled. And a young man followed him with nothing but linen cloth about his body.

And they seized him. But he left the linen cloth and ran away naked. Amen. Well, in a moment we will think about these words we've just read together.

[ 4 : 39 ] But before we do that, let me pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you so much for your precious words.

We thank you for these words that we've just read together. And I pray that as we spend a few moments thinking about them, would you please open our eyes?

Would you unblock our ears? Would you soften our hearts? So that we might hear and respond in obedience.

That we might repent and believe the gospel. We ask this for your sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 5 : 40 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

I saw perhaps more clearly than ever the depth of the relationship he had with his father. It was one of those rare windows into the very core of his being.

At the very center of our passage this afternoon is a rare window, and it's a window into the very heart of Jesus. We see something here of the great distress, the sheer weight of the burden that Jesus felt as he contemplated the cross and his imminent death.

And it's shocking, isn't it? In fact, this is a very rare window indeed. It is only one of three Jesus prayers that Mark records, and it's the only one where we have the words Jesus spoke in prayer with his father.

And it is so utterly profound, so moving, that we cannot possibly hope to unpack the depths of the significance of what happened in the Garden of Gethsemane, but we can know enough.

[ 7 : 17 ] Mark has given us this account so that we might repent and believe the gospel and to know forgiveness of sin. Even though we may struggle a little to get our minds around what's really happening here, we can know enough.

And in some ways, it's good, isn't it, to struggle a bit. It reminds us of the hugeness of the gods who created us and of the limitations that you and I have.

We are creatures after all. But here, in this prayer, right in the heart of this passage, we are given a unique insight into the huge significance of Jesus' death, an insight into the very character of God. Now, this is a large section we've read together, and in our time together, I want to briefly trace the storyline, but really pausing on the prayer in the Garden.

And then we'll tease out some of the implications for us today. So we'll look at the story Mark tells in three parts. Firstly, the predicted abandoning of Jesus, there in verses 26 to 31.

[ 8 : 25 ] And then the prayer in the Garden, the painful agony of Jesus. And then at the end, from verse 43 onwards, the pitiful arrest of Jesus.

So then, let's look first, verses 26 to 31, the predicted abandoning of Jesus. The great contrast running through these verses is between Jesus, on the one hand, and his disciples on the other. In the face of his upcoming death, Jesus resolves to submit to it. The disciples, on the other hand, flee. They abandon Jesus.

At almost every point in the story, they let him down. And it's here that the abandoning is predicted. Immediately following the Passover meal, Jesus and his disciples sing a hymn together, and then they head out to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus speaks some astonishing words about what is about to happen over the next hours and days.

He says, look down with me there at verse 27. He says, You will all fall away, for it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.

[ 9 : 38 ] But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. Jesus says here that God will strike the shepherd.

This is another reference to his death. And almost unbelievably, we see that who it is that's really going to do the striking, who really is putting Jesus to death, and it's God.

It's not the chief priests or the Roman soldiers, but it's God himself who brings about the death, the crucifixion of Jesus. And this perhaps explains the distress and anguish we see in Gethsemane in a moment or two.

So God will strike the shepherd. That is what's really going on at the cross. But following that, we see that the sheep will be scattered.

Jesus is explaining this statement at the start of verse 27, that his disciples will all fall away. The disciples' abandoning of Jesus runs right through this passage.

[ 10 : 50 ] And immediately after hearing these words from Jesus, Peter protests. He says, even though all the other disciples will fall away, I will not. But Jesus repeats his claim and tells Peter

specifically that he will deny him before the cock crows the next morning.

And by verse 72 of this chapter, that is fulfilled. By the end of this chapter, Jesus is very much alone as he faces his death, abandoned by all those closest to him because he's about to be killed.

Jesus knows what is going to happen to him. He understands. The disciples, although they hear him, don't really fully understand. Jesus knows he's going to die.

He knows that his disciples will flee. He knows, verse 28, that he will rise from the grave. He knows that he will see them again in Galilee. He knows that his death is not the end.

But the disciples didn't grasp that at all. They were expecting something of a fight back. Even though they've been told what was coming many times, even though Jesus said to them back in chapter 8, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

[12:14] When it came to the crunch, rather than deny self, the disciples denied Jesus. they needed to grasp, didn't they, that to follow Jesus meant cross-bearing.

You see, the Christian life is cross-shaped. And it wasn't just cross-shaped for Jesus. It's cross-shaped for all who would follow him.

The disciples here in chapter 14 hadn't grasped that. They needed to understand, you and I need to understand, that following Jesus means hardship, sacrifice, bearing your cross.

But remember that no sacrifice now can be too great if eternal life is on offer. And that is what Jesus offers for all who follow him. The disciples denied him.

Jesus predicts that he'll be abandoned. But he also predicts his resurrection. That he'll see his disciples again in Galilee. But even though Jesus knows that, knows that death is not the end, he still feels the deep pain of what is about to happen.

[13:33] So let's look on to our second point in the Garden of Gethsemane. And we see in verses 32 to 42, the painful agony of Jesus.

This passage is unique in Mark's gospel. As I mentioned earlier, this is the only prayer in the gospel where we see Jesus' words.

And we catch a glimpse of the weight Jesus carried on himself as he willingly went to the cross. Just look at how Jesus described here.

He began to be greatly distressed, troubled. Nowhere have we seen this before anywhere. Jesus is always in control, calm, collected.

And yet here, here he is greatly distressed. He says, my soul is sorrowful, even to death. And the language used here is very strong indeed.

[14:38] It conveys the idea of a man who is far away from home, feels abandoned, longing for companionship, but finding none. And here is why.

Verse 36. Here is Jesus' request. Abba, Father, all things are possible for you.

Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will. One preacher puts it very well and very succinctly.

He says this, Jesus was about to be exposed to the one thing in life he really feared. Not the cruel death which would end it, for he knew he would rise again, but the indescribable experience of feeling himself to be God forsaken.

Jesus knew that on the cross he would endure the awful agony of separation from his father. And so he asks that this cup be removed.

[15:50] Now this cup, that's laden with Old Testament significance. And it's worth just pausing for a moment to hear what the scriptures say about this cup. Isaiah chapter 51.

Wake yourself. Wake yourself. Stand up, O Jerusalem. You who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs of the bowl the cup of staggering.

And then Jeremiah. Thus, the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me, Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.

They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them. This cup Jesus speaks of, this cup that he asks to be removed from him, this cup is the terrifying judgment of God.

the judgment of God in response to man's sin, which Jesus was going to carry upon himself. The cup represents God's full-blown wrath and it is a truly frightening thing to behold.

[17:13] It must be, wasn't it? For Jesus, the perfect son of God, for him to feel this way about facing God's judgments, well, it must be so much graver, so much more serious than we normally think of.

If this is how Jesus felt about facing it, up until this point, nothing has fazed Jesus, but this, this is something of an entirely different order.

To drink the cup meant judgment, it meant separation from his father, alienation, and in his perfect humanity, Jesus shrunk from it.

Jesus had done nothing to deserve this judgment, he is the perfect son, the perfect man, without sin, and yet, remarkably, he is able to pray those words at the end of the prayer, not what I will, but what you will.

Jesus longed to be spared the cup, but he also longed to be obedient to the father, and so he submits to his will. He determines to drink the cup, and so when he is arrested in a few verses time, he goes willingly, without a fight.

[ 18 : 51 ] Isn't that just simply astonishing? Considering what the cup represented, considering the unimaginable pain that it would cause Jesus to drink that cup down to the dregs, considering all that, he was willing to do it.

Dreadful as it was, it meant salvation for sinners. Great was the cost for God the Father and God the Son, but great the benefit to us.

Jesus took the cup, paid the ransom, so we don't have to. He who was without sin, became sin for us, so that in him, we might become the righteousness of God.

We see here in the garden, the painful agony of Jesus, but he's willing to go, he's willing to submit. And those events in the garden are followed inevitably by Jesus' betrayal, and his arrest. So the third section here, verses 43 to 52, we see the pitiful arrest of Jesus.

[ 20 : 12 ] Judas arrives, bringing with him an armed crowd sent from the chief priests, the scribes and the elders. It's nighttime, it's dark, difficult to see.

Judas singles out Jesus with a kiss. There's a bit of a scuffle, and one of Jesus' disciples takes the ear of one of the guys come to arrest Jesus.

His disciples haven't fled yet. But then Jesus says, day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me, but let the scriptures be fulfilled.

It is only then, only once Jesus utters those words that the disciples flee. perhaps the penny drops and they realize Jesus really did mean when he said he would die.

It's happening, he's not fighting back, he's going with them. When they realize Jesus isn't going to fight back, isn't going to seek to evade arrest, they run, they flee.

[ 21 : 15 ] It's a pitiful scene, isn't it? A crowd armed to the teeth, a close disciple betraying his master. a man utterly innocent, willingly handing himself over, a group of disciples fleeing.

Jesus is alone and about to face his trial and later his execution. Jesus' words at the beginning of this passage are beginning to play out, aren't they?

God will strike the shepherds and the sheep will be scattered. some implications then as we reflect on these events and particularly as we reflect on that moment in the garden as Jesus prayed.

Three implications. First, we need to see the seriousness of sin. The sinfulness of man, we often underestimate, don't we?

sin, we perhaps make light of it because to concede the devastating depravity of sin is to condemn ourselves. We don't really like to think of ourselves in such terms.

[ 22 : 31 ] But sin is weightier and more serious than we dare admit, isn't it? Sin brought death into the world. That great and devastating curtain through which there was no turning back, the great separator.

Sin brought alienation from the God who created you. The weight of bearing our sin caused Jesus in all his perfect humanity to recoil, to be greatly distressed, to plead with his Father to have the burden of humanity's sin removed.

You must see the seriousness of your sin and of your desperate need for a savior. There is no other remedy but Jesus and his cross.

So that's the first implication, the seriousness of our sin. And linked to that is the gravity of God's right response to our sin, his judgment.

It's our second implication, the gravity of God's judgment. And it's a terrifying thing for Jesus to plead with his father to have the cup removed from him, for Jesus to make that request, to seek to escape it.

[ 23 : 50 ] God's judgment must be very grave indeed. Do not allow for a moment the world's belittling of the concepts of judgment and hell sway you.

If you lose sight of the reality and certainty and fearfulness of God's judgment, judgment, then you lose the cross. You lose the whole purpose of his coming, his death, the seriousness of sin and the gravity of God's judgment.

These are sobering truths, aren't they? But they are truths that drive us to the very heart of the gospel, truths that move us to repentance, to the repentance that is required if we are to lay hold of the salvation that Jesus offers, that he offers to all who will believe.

And so finally we see our third implication, the greatness of our Savior, the greatness of our Savior. Jesus remained faithful when his heart was breaking, when the cup was bitter, and when his companions were weak.

what a great Savior he is. The point here is not to be like Jesus. We can't.

[ 25 : 15 ] We would have run in the opposite direction if it was us in the garden, if we had to drink that cup of God's wrath. We would have legged it. We're more like the disciples, aren't we? That's the great contrast that runs through this section, through all of Mark's gospel, between Jesus and his disciples.

The disciples fail at every point. And in particular in this chapter, it's Peter who fails time and time again. But Jesus perfectly obeys at every point and resolutely faces his death.

If you or I were there, we would have been just like the disciples. We would do a Peter. You and I are utterly unable to do the right thing. We cannot deal with our sin problem.

them. We need help. We need a savior. And as we read these verses, we see that Jesus did what he did so that we would never have to.

Because of Jesus, you and I need not fear God's judgment. He has stood in the place that you and I deserve to stand. he took upon himself the rejection, the alienation from God that is rightly ours.

[ 26 : 31 ] Jesus' whole purpose in coming was to be a ransom for many. And we've seen in the garden what a great burden that was for the perfect son of God to bear. And yet he did bear it.

He did die on the cross. He did bear God's wrath. He did it so that we wouldn't have to face God's wrath. He did it so that you and I might know forgiveness from sin.

To echo the words of one of the greats from a previous generation. Here in the garden of Gethsemane, here is a love beyond human expression.

Fierce, costly love revealing the loving heart of God. how deep the Father's love for us.

How vast beyond all measure that he should give his only son to make a wretch his treasure. His wounds have paid my ransom.

[ 27 : 44 ] Will you believe it? Will you repent and believe? will you tell others?

We have a great savior, brothers and sisters. Let us not forget it. Let me pray. Let me pray. Father, these are sobering words to read and they give us a glimpse into the real heart of what happens on the cross.

we catch a glimpse of your great love for our sinful human beings that you would send your son to take the judgment on our behalf.

Thank you for the greatness of your love, for the greatness of your savior. here. We thank you in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.